

Baker Warns Shevardnadze Against Clamp on Lithuania

By THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN

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WASHINGTON, March 4 — Secretary of State James A. Baker 3d cautioned Foreign Minister Eduard A. Shevardnadze of the Soviet Union today that a crackdown in Lithuania could wipe out much of the progress made in Soviet-American relations in the last year.

Mr. Baker, an official said, told his Soviet counterpart that the Kremlin had to stop talking about all the legal and constitutional reasons the Lithuanians could not secede and accept that this was a "political problem" that would get steadily worse unless a process of negotiations was immediately begun.

Mr. Shevardnadze responded by tell-

Soviet official reportedly replies that Moscow prefers dialogue.

ing the Secretary of State that Moscow fully intended to resolve the Lithuania crisis in a way that will be satisfactory both to the Lithuanians and the Soviet Government.

Mr. Shevardnadze spoke with reporters after his three-and-a-half-hour meeting, the first in a series that will be held over three days. He said he reassured Mr. Baker "very authoritatively and very seriously that I have no doubt that we will find a solution to that situation that will be fair and wise."

Then he added, "And that solution will be consistent with the interests of both the Lithuanian people and the entire Soviet Union."

Mr. Baker appeared with Mr. Shevardnadze and was asked if he was reassured by what the Soviet Foreign Minister told him.

"Well, you have just heard what the Minister has said — that the weapon of choice is dialogue," Mr. Baker replied. "He repeated to me the importance of resolving this matter through dialogue and that is the way in which we would like to see the issue resolved — through peaceful means and dialogue. We hope very much that it does."

Called 'Very Important'

Mr. Baker added: "I pointed out to the Minister how very important it is in terms of the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union."

Mr. Baker said that Mr. Shevardnadze brought a letter from President Mikhail S. Gorbachev to President Bush, the contents of which he declined to disclose.

As Mr. Shevardnadze's black limousine rolled up to the State Department entrance, he was greeted on one side by Mr. Baker and across the street by a throng of demonstrators waving yellow, green and red Lithuanian flags and carrying signs that said "Mr. Bush, Remember China," and "Mr. President, Force Is Being Used."

"Nyet, Nyet, Nyet Soviet!" the crowd chanted.

When reporters asked Mr. Shevardnadze after the meeting whether tanks in the streets of Vilnius were not a use of force, he answered: "Well I think there is no use of force. Of course in many countries, in many states, measures are taken to impose order, to have a normal situation, and it is this that is being established, within the framework of the Constitution and within our laws."

Mr. Shevardnadze, who met with Mr. Baker in Namibia two weeks ago, assured him that Moscow had no intention of using force in Lithuania. But much has happened since then that has shaken the Administration's assumption that Mr. Gorbachev was basically resigned to letting the Baltic states go and that it was just a matter of finding the right cover and process to do it.

Part of what Mr. Baker will be trying

to do in the next three days is to assess precisely Moscow's goals in the Baltic region.

Also on the agenda for this week's talks are a variety of arms control issues, regional problems and the setting of a date for the June summit meeting between President Bush and Mr. Gorbachev.

Working Both Tracks

An Administration official said Mr. Baker's message to Mr. Shevardnadze on Lithuania was carefully balanced between a warning about the implications of a forced suppression of the Lithuanian independence movement and a reassurance that the United States understands that the Lithuania question is not a simple matter to resolve and that a spirit of compromise and negotiation is required by all parties.

In particular, the official said, Mr. Baker warned that any Soviet crack-



Associated Press

Supporters of the Soviet Government demonstrating in Vilnius yesterday against Lithuania's independence government.

down in Lithuania, like seizing power from the Lithuanian authorities or a mass conscription of youths into the Soviet Army, will undermine the progress that has been made in the relationship over the last year and deprive it of its momentum.

While the Administration does not want to see Soviet-American relations soured by the Lithuania issue, the official said, the political mood in Congress would leave it no choice but to cool off the relationship if the Soviets forcibly smother the Baltic independence movement.

That point was reinforced today when just a few hours before Mr. Shevardnadze arrived at the State Department, the House urged President Bush to formulate a plan for recognition of an independent Lithuania as soon as possible.

In a delicately phrased resolution, which has no legal force, the House voted 416 to 3 to urge the President "to plan for and take those steps, at the earliest possible time, that would normalize diplomatic relations with the new Government of Lithuania."

At the Administration's behest, the resolution stopped short of demanding immediate recognition of Lithuania. A similar resolution passed unanimously by the Senate two weeks ago called on the President to "consider" the Lithua-



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Tallinn disclosed having received a warning from Moscow.

nian government's appeal for recognition.

The United States has never recognized Lithuania's incorporation into the Soviet Union in 1940, though in the 1970's it did sign the Helsinki accords that accepted Europe's de facto borders in exchange for human-rights concessions by the Soviet bloc. But in the wake of the Baltic republic's March 11 declaration of independence, the Administration has said it will open a dip-

lomatic mission in Vilnius only when Lithuania has gained control over its own territory.

Once they get beyond the Lithuanian question, Mr. Baker and Mr. Shevardnadze are expected to try to bridge their differences over a variety of arms control issues that need to be resolved if a treaty limiting long-range nuclear missiles is to be ready for signing by Mr. Bush and Mr. Gorbachev when they meet in June.

When Mr. Shevardnadze and Mr. Baker met in Namibia, the Secretary of State presented a fairly detailed three-stage plan for a political settlement in Afghanistan that would allow the Soviet-installed Najibullah Government to remain in power for a transitional period while a new national authority was established.

Administration officials said today that the Soviet Union is expected to name a new Ambassador to the United States this year, perhaps in time for the summit meeting. The officials identified the likely new envoy as Aleksandr A. Bessmertnykh, who has served since October 1988 as one of three Soviet First Deputy Foreign Ministers.

He is now responsible for the United States, Canada and the Middle East. Mr. Bessmertnykh would replace Yuri V. Dubinin as part of a regular rotation of Soviet diplomats, American officials said.



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The White House and the Kremlin announced a date for a summit meeting as Secretary of State James A. Baker 3d, right, and Eduard A. Shevardnadze, the Soviet Foreign Minister, began their second day of talks.

It was apparently with the Congressional sentiments in mind that Mr. Baker told Mr. Shevardnadze of the importance of beginning negotiations with the Baltic states immediately.

Robert Legvold, director of the W. Averell Harriman Institute for the Advanced Study of the Soviet Union at Columbia University, said it could also be argued that setting a date increased the flexibility of the Administration. If it had refused to set a date, it would have lost its best leverage with Moscow, he said. Now it still has the flexibility to postpone or constrict the summit meeting, should the situation in Lithuania deteriorate drastically.

Administration officials, though, were sensitive to the accusation that scheduling the meeting sent a contradictory message to Moscow, and they tried to dispel the notion that setting

the date meant a softening of the United States' position on the fate of Lithuania.

"As it stands now, I would expect the summit to focus on Lithuania for at least some discussion — President Bush will raise it," Mr. Fitzwater said. "I think everybody views the Lithuanian situation very seriously. It does require a kind of sobering look at events and the situation in the Soviet Union. But, as the President said, the important point is that we are talking and, if anything, Lithuania makes a summit all the more important that the President is able to present the U.S. views forcefully and directly to him."

This will be Mr. Bush's second summit meeting with Mr. Gorbachev since becoming President. The two leaders met on Dec. 2 and 3 aboard ships off the island of Malta in the Mediterranean.

President Bush offered a 16-point program of technical and economic support for Mr. Gorbachev's economic and political changes in the Soviet Union, known as perestroika.

"It is very important that we have these conversations," President Bush told reporters shortly after the formal announcement was made today. "Dialogue is important. I'm looking forward to seeing Mr. Gorbachev here."

Administration officials said that the only thing the two sides have agreed on at this stage are the five days within which the summit will be held. Whether the two Presidents will meet all five days, whether they will hold all their talks in Washington or also meet somewhere else in the United States, and all other logistical details remain to be hammered out.



The New York Times/Paul Hosefros

Baker Cautions Shevardnadze on Soviet Crackdown in Lithuania

Secretary of State James A. Baker 3d, left, and the Soviet Foreign Minister, Eduard A. Shevardnadze, at meeting in Washington. Mr. Baker said that a

Soviet crackdown in Lithuania could wipe out much of the progress that has been made in the Soviet-American relationship in the last year. Page A16.

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